

# NEXT STEPS

for new believers at Hillcrest Baptist Church



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Upon accepting Christ as your savior you may have asked, "How do I now live for Christ?" This is a presentation of basic Christian beliefs and practices. The goal is to equip and encourage you to live a life that is pleasing to God. Using the Bible as your guide you can take your first of many steps in this life long journey of faith.

## *How do I use this curriculum?*

The best way to learn and apply these beliefs and practices is to walk through this presentation with an experienced Christian. This can be done one-on-one or with a small group of people.

Keep the teaching simple, based on the given scriptures and basic doctrinal ideas, but feel free to include personal experiences and to address other pertinent topics. This can be taught in one, long, single session or spread out over several sessions, using 15-minute, short talks or extended dialogues of 45-60 minutes. Provide a printable guide sheet so notes can be taken. The teaching can be done using various platforms: recorded video, phone, in person, email or a live online group meeting. Select a teaching approach that best suits the people and occasion.



# WHAT JUST HAPPENED?

You have accepted God's gift of salvation! He initiated a relationship with you to rescue you from your sin and brokenness. He loves you and has created you for a purpose, for a relationship with Him, the almighty creator of the universe. You now have the privilege and joy to live in community with Him.

To review your decision, you have recognized that you could not reach or appease God by your own efforts. He provided the way for you to be forgiven and to know Him. That is available only through Jesus Christ. Jesus said in John 14:6, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."* You are now free from the bondage of sin and free to live a life pleasing to Him. You are saved. (Romans 6)

There is not enough good that any person can do to make themselves acceptable before the holy God. He provides the way to know Him. It is only through Jesus' provision that people can come to know God. This is what makes Jesus Christ unique. No other efforts and no other religion can meet the high standards to approach the holy God. Ephesians 2:8-9 states, *"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."*

## **God gives you assurance that you are now His!**

You are forever God's. You are part of His family. He is with you every moment of every day. Nothing can remove God's provision of salvation or take away His presence from you. The Bible states in Romans 8:37-39 *"Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

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**Ephesians 2:8-9**

Jesus says in John 5:24, *"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life."* In 1 John 5:13 the author John affirms this confidence we have in our salvation through Christ. *"These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God."* God is committed to you, to love you and to guide you. Rest assured that you are in His care forevermore.

## **What have I committed to God?**

You have committed to live your life for God and with God. You can trust God with your life and your future. Proverbs 3:5-6 says, *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."* He created you and every person for a purpose. In Jeremiah 29:11 God states, *"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope."* You have made a decision to accept His forgiveness, to live for His purposes, and to journey daily with Him.

# A NEW LIFE JOURNEY HAS BEGUN!

The culmination of God's creation was humanity. The Bible says in Genesis 1:26-27, *"Then God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."* Humanity was created in God's likeness which drives us to seek a deep, communal bond with Him. God created you to have a personal relationship with Him.

## ***Journey with God each day.***

God, even to this very day, wants to have a relationship with you and every person. Psalm 1:1-2 states, *"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night."* Communing with God daily is vital for growing in your faith. Set aside a time for daily devotions. Ten to thirty minutes in the morning or in the evening works well. Find a quiet spot where you can keep a regular devotional schedule. Read the Bible, pray, read a daily devotional, listen to music, or keep a journal.

*"Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things which you do not know."*

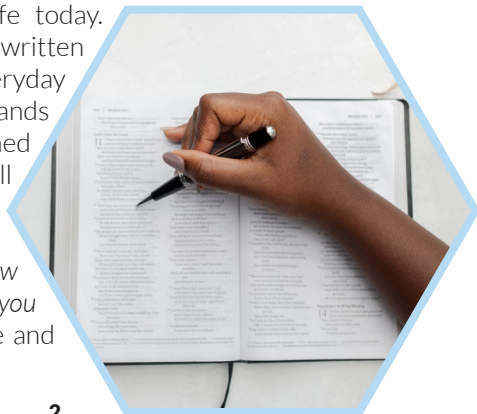
**Jeremiah 33:3**

Be expectant of what the Lord God will show you. *"Deal bountifully with Your servant, that I may live and keep Your word. Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law."* (Psalm 119:17-18). God says in Jeremiah 33:3, *"Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know."* Be ready for a meaningful and thrilling journey with God.

## ***The Bible is meant to be read by you.***

*"Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You. I will meditate on Your precepts, and contemplate Your ways. I will delight myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word"* (Psalm 119:11, 15-16). God's word, the Bible, is pertinent to life today.

It was originally written in common everyday languages. Though written thousands of years ago, the Bible has remained both relevant and revolutionary for all those years. Jesus said in John 8:31-32, *"If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."* The Bible's truths are ever true and applicable.



The primary way God speaks to us today is through the Bible. He gave us the Bible to read and follow. It gives us principles for living. According to 2 Timothy 3:16-17, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." You can trust the Bible to be the ultimate authority and to fulfill every promise it makes. Read the Bible regularly and apply it with confidence.

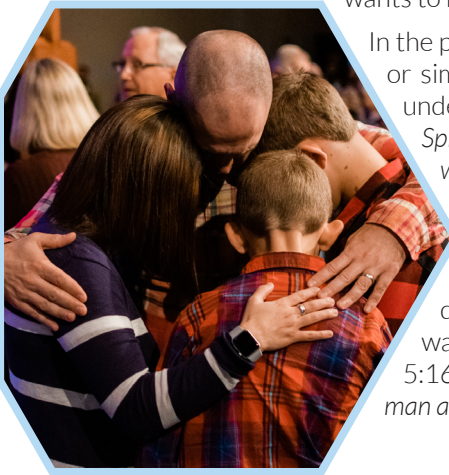
### **God interacts with you through prayer.**

Prayer is simply communicating with God. Speak to Him from your heart. He is listening. When praying we draw near to Him to find out what He wants. He wants to know your thoughts and feelings. Hebrews 4:16 advises, "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

Communicating with the creator of the universe is a humble privilege. We can communicate with the living God, finite and sinful though we are, because He has reached out to us through Jesus Christ. 1 Timothy 2:5 affirms this: "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." Any person can come in prayer directly to God because through Jesus we have open access to God. He wants to hear directly from You.

*"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."*

**Hebrews 4:16**



In the practice of prayer, you can speak, think, read, write or simply lift your emotions to God. He will hear and understand you. Romans 8:26 states, "Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

Merge both prayer and Bible reading during your devotional time. God will speak to you in this two-way conversation. He always will respond. James 5:16 says, "The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much."

# SHARE YOUR FAITH ADVENTURE BY...

## **...telling others your faith story.**

Your life purpose and eternal destiny have been changed. God offers you the very best. Better than anything you can accomplish on your own. This is exciting and propels you to make others aware of the salvation that the all-loving God offers to them as well. This good news of salvation through Christ is what the Bible asks you to share with others. *"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good things, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns!'"* (Isaiah 52:7).

Here are some questions that serve as a four-step outline for sharing your story. Write out your story. Say it out loud keeping it to under five minutes. Personalize your story and add a significant Bible verse to it. Keep your story appropriate for the person who is hearing it.

1. What was my life like before I received Christ?
2. How did I know that I needed Christ?
3. What took place when I accepted Christ as savior?
4. How has my life has been different since Jesus saved me?

*"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."*

**Matthew 28:19**

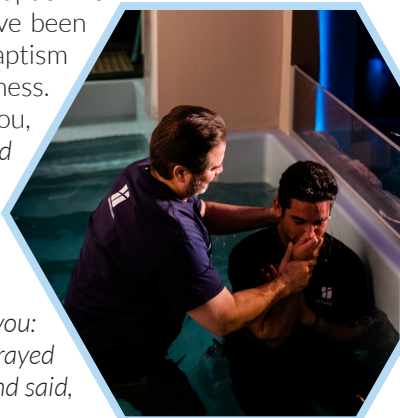
## **...demonstrating your faith through baptism.**

Baptism reflects your personal commitment to Christ. The baptism ceremony is an outward expression that as a Christian you no longer live for yourself but now live for Christ. *"But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip."* (Acts 11:12-13).

In the original language used in the Bible, the word for baptism literally means to be immersed. Baptism is symbolic of your new relationship with God. You have been immersed into a relationship with God Almighty. Baptism demonstrates your decision to accept God's forgiveness. Your decision to turn to God in faith is what saves you, not the act of baptism or the water. *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"* (Matthew 28:19).

## **...remembering Jesus's sacrifice.**

*"For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said,*



*'Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes" (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).* This act of remembering Jesus's death, burial, and resurrection is often called the Lord's Supper, the Eucharist, or Communion. It is symbolic of the actual event and

reminds you of what Jesus sacrificed to restore you. It is a memorial celebration that prompts you to live humbly and Christ-centered. The church partakes of the Lord's Supper on a regular basis. It is taken by those who have been saved and have followed Christ in baptism.

### **...gathering with other believers.**

As previously mentioned, God desires for every person to know Him and to be His people. He created us to live in community with Him. His people share His presence in common.

Regardless of race, culture, or language, we are all bound together by a commonality of God's personalized love and purpose.



*"And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another."* This passage from Hebrews 10:24-25 challenges you and all believers to gather together. The first followers of Jesus did this: *"Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight. There were many lamps in the upper room where they were gathered together" (Acts 20:7-8).*

A working definition of a church is a community of people who follow Jesus Christ as Lord. The church is a collection of people who follow God, not a collection of buildings under a steeple. It is about who we are as followers of Jesus. It is more than being recognized by the good works we do. This is what Colossians 4:12-17 prescribes for the gathering known as the church: *"Holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."*

### **...engaging your faith through giving.**

When you entered this relationship with God, all that you are and all that you possess fall under His care. You are entrusting Him with your total life. Our creator God is already the owner and ruler of all that exists.

Offering our possessions, which are the products of our toil and God's blessings, is an admission of a humble attitude and gratitude. Offering your possessions has a deeper

significance: it is symbolic of another offering which Christians make—the offering of yourself. *“So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver”* (2 Corinthians 9:7).

The ultimate meaning of Christian giving is an expression of worship to a deserving God, who *“so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life”* (John 3:16). Giving is an opportunity for us to worship God who is worthy of our praise, adoration, service, and offering!

*“So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.”*

**2 Corinthians 9:7**

Recognizing that 100% of what we have is already God's. The Bible asks God's people to give 10% back to the church. This is what is called the tithe, or a tenth. *“The children of Israel brought in abundance the firstfruits of grain and wine, oil and honey, and of all the produce of the field; and they brought in abundantly the tithe of everything”* (2 Chronicles 31:5).

The church today offers several ways for you to give. Please contact the church financial office for how you can generously give tax-deductible offerings.

### **...reaching your world, locally and globally.**

Jesus had a purpose for coming to earth. His mission was to seek and save those in need of salvation. *“And Jesus said to him, ‘Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost’”* (Luke 19:9-10). Sharing this message of salvation continues with you and all followers of Jesus. He charged His disciples to *“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature”* (Mark 19:15).

This message of salvation to which you said yes is the same message that is to be told to every person in the world. You and all believers are invited by Jesus to join and continue His mission. The message is that *“If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved”* (Romans 10:9). It is simple and easy to learn, and it is a message of eternal hope that everyone needs to hear.

Like the early Christians you are to bear witness of this good news locally, regionally, nationally, and globally. Acts 1:8 describes this commission: *“you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”* This means going beyond the confines of your immediate home and comfort with the message of salvation. There are many avenues available for you personally to participate in this commission. Consult with a minister or church leader to learn where the church is already engaged in mission projects around the world.



# WHAT CAN YOU KNOW OF THE ALMIGHTY GOD WHO LOVES YOU?

The Bible says, “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.” (Isaiah 55:8-9). Obviously, God is far superior to any human thought, knowledge, or handiwork. The Bible reveals to us who God is.

**The Bible:** God inspired the writing of His word. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Scripture points the reader to Jesus Christ. Scripture convicts as God’s Spirit speaks through the message of the Bible. Be assured that the Bible’s claims and promises will never fail. The Bible is the ultimate authority and standard by which you can test any thought or action. You can count on the Bible to be true and applicable for everyone of every era of history. “For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

**God:** God is loving, majestic, all powerful, all knowing and ever present. God is a social being, comprised of three persons, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit. All three persons of the Godhead are deity, eternal, unified, holy, of the same essence but with varying functions.

One way to illustrate the varying roles of the Godhead is by using the theme of salvation. Notice all three are described in this passage: “When the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior.” (Titus 3:4-6). Here are each of their roles in salvation:

- The Father’s power and love for salvation, “My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand” (John 10:29).
- The Son’s death and resurrection for salvation, “And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world” (1 John 2:1-2).

*“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness..”*

**2 Timothy 3:16-17**

- The Spirit's restoration and seal for salvation, *"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption"* (Ephesians 4:30).

**Humans:** God was intentional in making humans the crown jewel of creation. We were created to bring glory to God. God says in Isaiah 43:7, *"Everyone who is called by My name, whom I have created for My glory; I have formed him, yes, I have made him."* He has given each person the freedom of choice. He does not coerce us to love Him. He is clear that He wants you to love Him and in turn love others. Jesus said, *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength." This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these"* (Mark 12:30-31). Each person of any age, every race, and in any location possesses full human dignity and is worthy of respect and love from God and you. Every life has a special value and purpose in God's plan.

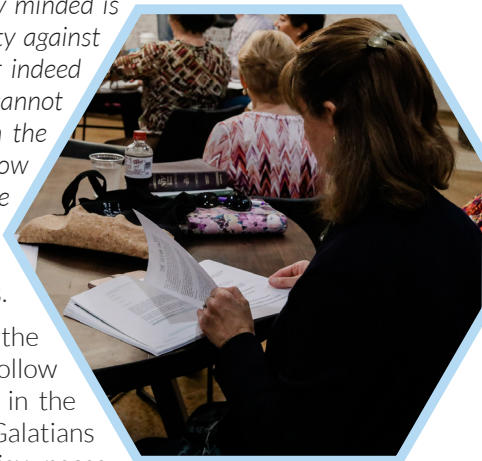
*"Everyone who is called by My name, whom I have created for My glory; I have formed him, yes, I have made him."*

**Isaiah 43:7**

Yet we have all have sinned and broken our relationship with God. Romans 3:23 states, *"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."* This is why God offers you and everyone else His plan of salvation. *"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance"* (2 Peter 3:9). Through salvation God has restored you to a relationship with Him.

This is so that you can live a life that is pleasing to God. A life that is indwelt by God's Spirit. *"For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His"* (Romans 8:5-9). Through His Spirit God enables you to live a life pleasing to God. He wants you to succeed as a follower of Jesus.

**Disciple:** Being a disciple of Jesus Christ is the life-long endeavor of a Christian. It means to follow Him, to please Him and to trust Him. Living in the Spirit of God produces fruit according to Galatians 5:22-23, *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law."* A disciple learns to truly love, *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another"* (John 13:34-35). A disciple is driven more by a love relationship rather than legal regulations.



**God's Will:** How can you know God's will for your life? The Bible answers this in Romans 12:1-2, *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.*

*And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."*

When your pursuit is to please God, His desires for your life are more easily understood. Your choices and decisions, when kept within the framework of the Bible, will lead you to "know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord" (Deuteronomy 8:3). And "that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:17). With unfailing certainty God's word will give you instruction and direction for your life journey.



**Peace:** Peace with God, with yourself and with others is an innate quest for every person. And only God Himself can suitably fill that void. *"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"* (Romans 5:1). Around our globe and throughout history humanity has striven for peace. Realizing that you were at odds against God because of your sin is a first step in having peace. You repented and turned from your sins, finding forgiveness through Jesus. In John 16:33 Jesus said, *"In Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."* Genuine peace, contentment, assurance and purpose is there when we trust in Jesus and live for Him. The world's standards will never bring humanity genuine and eternal peace.

**Family:** Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in a covenant commitment for a lifetime. *"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh"* (Genesis 2:24). The family was part of God's original intent for humanity.

*"God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth'"* (Genesis 1:26). Children are a blessing and a responsibility. *"Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them"* (Psalm 127:3-5). The family is valuable. It is instrumental for God's plan for humanity and has been since the first days of history.

**Morality:** Your life and every person's life is valuable, important, precious and has a godly purpose. With the attitude of Christ, you and all Christians should oppose racism, every form of greed, selfishness, vice, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography. You should work to provide for

*"Behold, children are the heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth..."*

**Psalms 127:3-5**

the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, the enslaved and the sick. You should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death. Every Christian should seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the God's principles of righteousness, truth, brotherly love and freedom of religion. In order to promote these ends you should be ready to work with all people of good will in any good cause, always being careful to act in the spirit of love without compromising your loyalty to Christ and biblical truth. Galatians 5:22-25 states, *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."* Read Romans chapters 1, 12, 13 and 14 for more scriptural insights. Succinctly put, Jesus Christ is the exclusive viable answer to all morality issues.

**Truth:** Truth is determined by God through the Bible, not by political correctness, philosophical rationale, academic realization or everyday speculations. Ultimate truth is defined by God, not by our world. In Jesus we find the truth. *"Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ"* (John 1:17). Jesus in John chapter 17 prays for His disciples, *"I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also*

*have sent them into the world."* Truth is certain and valid regardless of time, culture, location, fads, or opinion. Only God can meet the definition of truth.

*"If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."*

**John 8:31-32**

Truth is not determined by your choice. Truth is not relative to anything as it is the standard for everything. It is not your truth or my truth. It is truth regardless of what you, me or anyone thinks is truth. Our choice is to accept the truth or reject it. Romans chapter 1 condemns those *"who exchanged the truth of God for the lie"* and who *"also approve of those who practice them."* Isaiah 5:20-21 states, *"Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!"*

There is freedom when we know the truth and live by what is true. Jesus said in John 8:31-32, *"If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."* Life is more meaningful and liberated, and less distorted and entangled when we live truthfully.

**Sin:** Sin is turning away from God's desire by your actions, attitudes or thoughts. Anything you do that does not please God is sin. Rejecting Him and turning to your own pleasure is sin. *"Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God"* (Romans 6:12-13).

We are all guilty of sin before God. At some point in our lives you and every person has deliberately sinned. *"Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God';*

for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed" (James 1:13-14). But the evil one, called the Devil, leads the rebellion against God. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith" (1 Peter 5:8-9).

When faced with temptation, the desire for worldly pleasure, self-seeking gain, or to carry out evil, God pledges His support at that time if you turn to Him. "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:12-13). Lean upon God when facing sin and its destruction. He will protect and restore you. "For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You" (Psalm 86:5).

**Heaven and Hell:** For those who believe in Jesus, God promises eternal life after this earthly life. "For our citizenship is in heaven" according to Philippians 3:20. Jesus Himself speaks about heaven. *"In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also"* (John 14:2-3). As Jesus hung dying on the cross, the thief on the cross next to Him requested, *"Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom."* And Jesus said to him, *'Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise'*" (Luke 23:43-44).

*"In My Father's house there are many mansions: if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you..."*

**John 14:2-3**

Heaven is a real place where God's people will spend all eternity. Read Revelation chapters 21 and 22 for a description of heaven.



Hell is real place too. "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.' And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life" (Matthew 25:41, 46). Hell is a place of continuous torment for rejecting God. "He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night" (Revelation 14:10-11). God is loving and desires no person to end up in hell. God offered His own son Jesus as a way to pay for your sins and not face

God's wrath for your wrongs. The choice is each person's to make. No one else's faith or religious actions can take the place of Jesus who on the cross paid for your sins.

All people throughout all of history are given this opportunity. "For the wrath of God is

*revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse” (Romans 1:18-20).*

# CONCLUSION

On a personal note, I made my decision to accept Jesus as my savior and Lord when I was a child. I knew that I wanted to live for God. This commitment blossomed over the years as I learned from Christians who invested themselves

in me. Now I am investing myself in making disciples of you and others. My confidence has always rested in God and His purposes for my life. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your

*"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."*

**Proverbs 3:5-6**

own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths." (Proverbs 3:5-6) I hope that you will carry on this legacy until the end of times as Christ charged us to do in the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20, "And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.' Amen."



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